



## STATEMENT

### Senate Democratic Policy Committee May 6, 2004

As many of you know, the Asian American community, which includes Muslims, Sikhs and South Asians, were particularly the affected by hate-crimes in the aftermath of the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001. Though the incidents of hate crimes have reduced since the initial rise in the first 6 months follow 9/11, they have not stopped. In fact the number of incidents rose last year in the weeks leading to the launch of the war in Iraq.

Current law limits federal jurisdiction to federally protected activities and does not permit federal jurisdiction when state and local law enforcement do not have the capacity to prosecute hate crimes.

The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act (S.966) introduced by Sen. Kennedy on May 1, 2003, will permit federal prosecution regardless of whether a federally protected activity is involved. There are currently 49 cosponsors of the bill.

A similar bill, Hate Crimes Prevention Act (HR 4204), was introduced in the House by Cong. Conyers on April 22. Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi issued a strong statement in support of passage of this bill. It currently has 174 cosponsors.

Secondly, the issue of racial profiling continues to be a problem. As you know, thousands of minorities have experienced the humiliation of being stopped while driving, flying, or even walking -- the color of their skin, their cultural or religious background makes them "suspect".

Racial profiling is wrong. It is an ineffective law enforcement practice steeped in racial, religious and cultural stereotypes and erroneous assumptions about the propensity of African-American, Latino, Asian or Arabic people to commit particular types of crimes.

In February the ACLU released a report "Sanctioned Bias: Racial Profiling Since 9/11" on how racial profiling has become official government policy. According to the report, racial profiling has undermined the respect and trust between law enforcement and communities of color which is essential for successful police work, and it send the message that some citizens do not deserve equal protection under the law.

Many of the groups around the table strongly support the End Racial Profiling Act (**S.2132**), introduced in the Senate by Senator Feingold in February. The bill would define racial profiling, require data collection, provide legal options to those injured by profiling and provide grant programs for law enforcement agencies.

The bill currently has 15 cosponsors in the Senate. The companion bill in the House (**H.R.3847**) currently has 120 cosponsors.

The premise of this bill is straightforward: Race, ethnicity and religion are not grounds for criminal suspicion.

We hope the Democratic Leadership in the Senate will push for the passage of both of these important pieces of legislation.

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